



State of Wisconsin
Department of Public Instruction
Elizabeth Burmaster, State Superintendent

*****NEWS RELEASE*****

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Ten projects receive 'Standing Up for Rural Wisconsin' awards

MADISON—State Superintendent Elizabeth Burmaster recognized 10 programs for enriching rural schools, libraries, and communities during a ceremony at the state Capitol today.

"Everyone here knows the joys of our rural schools and communities," Burmaster said. "The sense of unity and the values of hard work, collaboration, and innovation inspire thoughtful, committed citizens to work for the public good. Rural residents know that the future of their towns and villages is inextricably linked to the health and vitality of their public schools and libraries. Their communities are what they make them."

This was the fourth time that Burmaster presented Standing Up for Rural Schools, Libraries, and Communities awards. A description for each of the projects receiving recognition follows:

The **Cashton Eagles in Action for Health and Wellness** is a health and disease-prevention effort by the Village of Cashton, Scenic Bluffs Community Health Centers, and Cashton School District. Facing a 61 percent obesity rate and an 83 percent federal poverty rate, the partners needed to collaborate to bring a true community-wide focus to improving health. **Mari Freiberg**, executive director of Scenic Bluffs, coordinates the work of the partnership and serves as director of activities and wellness. Accepting the award were Freiberg, **David Amundson**, and **Robert Amundson**.

Through community effort, **Hazel Dell School** is a restored and historically accurate one-room schoolhouse, which serves as a hands-on learning experience for area students as well as a museum and repository for historical documents and artifacts. Owned by the Iowa-Grant School District, Hazel Dell School is the last of the area's one-room schools. The 128-year-old facility is located on its original site. **Mary Sue Divine** accepted the award.

The goal for Kiel's **Agriculture Career Awareness Day** is to expose 200 seventh- and eighth-grade students to the many agriculture-related careers available to them. During the event, students visit various stations sponsored by community businesses and industries to learn about agriculture-related careers such as landscaping, pet food

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manufacturing, agronomy, natural resources, animal care, and agriculture technology. High school students assist the businesses, and other community organizations donate money and resources to help students to learn about and appreciate the businesses in their own community. Accepting the award were **Mary Adleman, Robert Ash, and Katrina Pionek.**

The Rusk County Community Library and the Ladysmith-Hawkins School District collaborated to create **Summer Learning in the Park.** The three week-long program includes time for children in grades K-4 to develop and maintain reading and mathematics skills, use the library and participate in the summer reading program, share meal times, and engage in recreational activities. Professional performers, funded by the Friends of the Library, augment the offerings. Accepting the award were **Carolyn Forde and Erica Moravec.**

The **Luck Library-Museum Building Project** was the community's first new construction on Main Street since the 1970s. Funding came from private donations and a Rural Development Block Grant. In-kind donations for excavation, cement work, plumbing, interior finishing, heating, painting, and carpeting made the project a true community-wide effort and a legacy to literacy and life-long learning. Accepting the award were **Chuck Adelman, Tam Howie, and Marty Messar.**

The Paw Shop sells handcrafted items and gently used clothing and household items to Mercer residents. The shop also serves as an inviting meeting place for senior citizens. High school students manage the shop, learning job readiness and entrepreneurial skills as well as cross-generational communication skills. Support for the effort comes from the Senior Tax Exchange Program and the Retired Service Volunteer Program. **Jeff Ehrhardt** accepted the award.

Developed by a group of interested citizens and school staff, **Team Osseo-Fairchild For Excellent Experiences (TOFFEE)** provides Osseo-Fairchild high school seniors with support and information to plan for the future. Approximately 45 trained community members hold "TOFFEE breaks" with students once a month throughout the school year to foster conversation and meaningful interactions to give students a positive start toward adulthood. **Steve Glocke** accepted the award.

For the past four years, schools and businesses in southwest Wisconsin have conducted a forum to discuss employer needs in the region. Attracting more than 150 attendees, the **Business and Education Summit for Southwest Wisconsin** has explored topics such as 21st century skills and ways to strengthen rigor, relevance, and relationships in the school curriculum. An outcome of the forum has been grants to support partnerships between students and real world business projects. "Get Real," an example of those projects, addresses financial awareness and has more than 900 participants. Accepting the award were **Darla Burton, Julie Pluemer, and Greg Quam.**

A brainstorming session to increase youth involvement led to discussions on fuel and transportation costs that would restrict access to activities. Next came the idea for an alternative fuel project, which converts waste oil into biodiesel fuel for Westfield School District buses and other vehicles. Biodiesel manufacturing equipment for the **Alternative Fuels Project of Westfield** came from a Healthy Communities Healthy Youth grant. The project saves money; helps the environment; provides an

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innovative, hands-on educational experience for students; encourages healthy lifestyles; and serves the community. Accepting the award were **Chris Langenfeld, Scott Petersen, and Roger Schmidt.**

Turning unused grounds surrounding the Weston School District into a school garden does more than educate students about planting and harvesting produce. The **Weston Garden Initiative** helps with the school district food budget and improves the nutritional quality of meals served to students. The project attracts multiple generations from the community to work the garden, which produces corn, watermelon, pumpkins, and apples. With recent repairs to the school greenhouse, the district planted lettuce in January. Future plans call for composting, expanding the vegetable gardens, diversifying the fruits grown in the orchards, and increasing the use of the greenhouse. **Carl Welke** accepted the award.

Burmaster concluded the program congratulating the honorees. “Your efforts—the efforts of your schools, libraries, and communities—provide a strong, solid foundation for the work of educating our children and for the enrichment of rural Wisconsin. Thank you for the tremendous contributions you have made to our state’s rural communities,” she said.

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NOTES: This news release is available electronically at http://dpi.wi.gov/eis/pdf/dpi2009_30.pdf. A photo gallery from the awards program will be available on the Department of Public Instruction website at <http://dpi.wi.gov/sprntdnt/photos.html>.